

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00284 142138Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9508

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 0284

FOR KARL ACKERMAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, APER, BEXP, AR

SUBJECT: VISA ISSUANCES

REF BUENOS AIRES 9315

1. UPON RETURN FROM CHIEF OF MISSION CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON I WAS AGAIN BRIEFED BY CONSUL GENERAL AND BY A/DCM, WHO WAS CHARGE' IN MY ABSENCE, CONCERNING INCREASINGLY CRITICAL MANPOWER SHORTAGE IN CONSULAR SECTION.

2. INABILITY OF CONSULAR SECTION TO MEET INCREASING DEMANDS FOR NONIMMIGRANT VISA SERVICES AS RESULT OF SHORTAGE IS AFFECTING ENTIRE EMBASSY AS ALL SECTIONS CONTINUOUSLY RECEIVE THROUGHOUT EACH DAY INCREASING REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM CONTACTS OR FRIENDS OF CONTACTS WHO WISH VISAS BUT WHO CANNOT GET IN THE DOOR.

3. CONSULAR SECTION HAS HAD TO LIMIT WALK-INS TO 50 PER DAY PLUS 5 CASES PER DAY FOR FIRST 20 IN LINE FROM SOME 70 TRAVEL AGENCIES TOTAL CASE LOAD FROM THESE 2 ELEMENTS RUNNING AROUND 150 PER DAY. IN ADDITION CONSUL GENERAL WHO FOR PAST 6 MONTHS HAD BEEN HANDLING 25 TO 50 CASES PER DAY PERSONALLY HAS AS RESULT OF "RECOMENDADOS" FROM EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND HIGH PLACED OFFICIALS IN ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN EMBASSIES BEEN AVERAGING ONE HUNDRED CASES PER DAY HANDLED PERSONALLY SINCE GROSSMAN DEPARTED IN DECEMBER. TOTAL DAILY CASE LOAD THEREFORE AROUND 250 PLUS.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 00284 142138Z

4. WHILE FIGURE OF 100 IN ITSELF MEANS LITTLE, IT POINTED OUT THAT DURING 8 HOUR DAY A FIGURE OF 96 REFLECTS ONE CASE EVERY FIVE MINUTES. NIV CASE LOAD FOR CALENDAR 1974 WAS OVER 51,000.

5. IN SPITE OF EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF CONSULAR STAFF TO COPE SECTION IS DAILY TURNING BACK 100 - 200 WALK-INS AND 500 TRAVEL AGENCY CASES WITH RESULTANT COMPLAINTS AND DIMINISHING PUBLIC IMAGE FOR CONSULAR SECTION, AND ENTIRE EMBASSY.

6. DURING PAST SEVERAL MONTHS WALK-IN APPLICANTS HAVE BEGUN LINING UP IN FRONT OF CONSULATE AS EARLY AS 4:45 P.M. THE DAY BEFORE IN HOPES OF BEING ATTENDED NEXT DAY. DOOR TO CONSULAR ENTRY ON 3RD FLOOR BROKEN DOWN LAST WEEK BY CRUSH OF APPLICANTS WHO HAD MANAGED TO REACH AREA IN SPITE OF GUARDS AND FIST FIGHTS AND SHOVING MATCHES FOR PLACES IN LINE ARE A DAILY OCCURANCE WITH OCCASIONAL MINOR INJURIES.

7. WE ARE NOW BEGINNING TO GET SOME PRESS INQUIRIES DUE TO SITUATION AND CAN ANTICIPATE A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM AS A RESULT.

8. IT WOULD BE FAIR TO SAY THAT EVERY OFFICER IN THIS MISSION HEARTILY CONCURS IN FOLLOWING REQUEST FOR ACTION BY DEPARTMENT.

1) AN ADDITIONAL CONSULAR OFFICER POSITION BE ESTABLISHED AND AN OFFICER ASSIGNED AT SOONEST POSSIBLE DATE. IN THE MANTIME HOWEVER REQUEST SPANISH SPEAKING VISA OFFICER BE SENT AT ONCE REPEAT AT ONCE ON TDY UNTIL ADDITIONAL PERMANENT POSITION REQUESTED CAN BE FILLED.

2) THREE ADDITIONAL LOCAL POSITIONS ARE DESPERATELY NEEDED FOR LOB AND LOC WORK IN FILE ROOM.

9. IN CONNECTION WITH LATTER REQUEST GENERAL SALISBURY, CHIEF MILITARY ASSISTANCE GROUP HAS ORGANIZED USMILGP WIVES ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS OF 2 PER DAY TO ASSIST VOLUNTARILY REPEAT VOLUNTARILY IN FILE ROOM UNTIL POSITIONS REQUESTED CAN BE OBTAINED AND FILLED.

10. THE DEPARTMENT'S MOST URGENT ATTENTION TO THE FOREGOING UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 00284 142138Z

WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
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